

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

DATE February 24, 1981

SUBJECT Big River, Missouri

FROM Paul M. Walker *PMW*
Acting Director, SVAN

TO William J. Keffer
Chief, Emergency Planning and Response Branch

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Bill Rice continues to be extremely concerned that the current Department of Interior interest in the Big River project not result in an impediment to the state's efforts to negotiate a satisfactory remedy with St Joe Minerals. While you were away, I contacted Mr. Corlin Cook and subsequently Bob Schreiber and discussed the March 9 meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Service in North Kansas City. Mr. Cook understands the potential hazard of negatively influencing the negotiations, and seems to understand that the Federal Government must give the states an opportunity to continue with the lead in this project. He indicated that the meeting was as much a coordination meeting between various agencies for Emergency Response activities as it was to discuss the Big River project.

I indicated to Bob Schreiber our interest in not inhibiting their negotiations with this meeting, and that we had expressed this concern to the Fish and Wildlife Service. I mentioned to him the belief that Dr. Whitely would be at the meeting, and he indicated this should be no problem between them and the Conservation Service. He further indicated they had a meeting on this project in which the Conservation Service would be represented some time this week.

This meeting must be conducted so that nothing that occurs during the meeting or as a result of the meeting can be a major factor in the state's negotiations. For example, we cannot even give anyone a glimmer of hope that federal funds might be available for correcting or mitigating actions as this could influence St Joe Minerals eventual agreement.

Since Mike Ward has become quite informed on this issue, I ask that you personally contact him and discuss the upcoming meeting with him. In fact, the portion of the meeting pertaining to Big River should not even take place in any ~~substantive~~ way without Mike Ward being present.

Please keep me informed of any additional information about this upcoming meeting.

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